

Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason

Cello/Piano



—2022 Spring Season—



Dear Friends,

Welcome to Princeton University Concerts!

It is surreal to reach this moment—the final concert of our first pandemic season. It was just a few short months ago that we cautiously gathered again after COVID-19 interrupted our programming for the very first time in our 128-year history. Your commitment to music even amidst the pervasive uncertainty that has become our new normal is a true testament to the grounding power of live chamber music—and although the future remains no less uncertain, I feel all the more confident that music will continue to play an ever important role within it.

That is what makes the announcement of our upcoming 2022/23 season feel momentous. While it has always been Princeton University Concerts' intention to help serve as a bridge between the world of music and the perpetually changing times in which we live—to help us experience and consider music within the context of our personal and communal histories—I am now approaching this mission with a renewed sense of urgency. With every offering, live or digital, Princeton University Concerts will strive to refine this essential and intricate relationship. And I am sincere in my invitation to you to be a part of this process as together we rebuild our community and look towards the future.

Thank you for your presence, your support, and your devotion to music.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Marna Seltzer". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Marna Seltzer

Director of Princeton University Concerts

Thanks for joining us!

We look forward to welcoming you back next season.

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at 7:30PM • Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall
Pre-concert event at 6:30PM: 22/23 season announcement with a special
performance by the Trenton Youth Orchestra, Conducted by Lou Chen

SHEKU KANNEH-MASON Cello **ISATA KANNEH-MASON** Piano

**LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN**
(1770–1827)

Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 4 in C Major, Op. 102, No. 1 (1815)
Andante—Allegro vivace
Adagio—Tempo d'andante—Allegro vivace

**DMITRI
SHOSTAKOVICH**
(1906–1975)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40 (1934)
Allegro non troppo
Allegro
Largo
Allegro

INTERMISSION

**FRANK
BRIDGE**
(1879–1941)

Sonata for Cello and Piano, H. 125 (1917)
Allegro ben moderato
Adagio ma non troppo—Molto allegro agitato

**BENJAMIN
BRITTEN**
(1913–1976)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Major, Op. 65 (1961)
Dialogo. Allegro
Scherzo-Pizzicato. Allegretto
Elegia. Lento
Marcia. Energico
Moto perpetuo. Presto

PLEASE NOTE: Wearing a mask over your mouth and nose is required while
inside the venue. Thank you for keeping our community safe.

Trenton Youth Orchestra

CONDUCTOR/DIRECTOR

Lou Chen

SOLOIST

Ashanti Ross

VIOLIN 1

Ashanti Ross**

Collin Thompson**

Deborah Htu

Francisco Guerra

Olivia Keith-Henry

Roberto Haubold

Jack Shigeta***

VIOLIN 2

Evita Vasquez Reyes*

Andre Diaz*

Jonathan Velez

William Santiago

Alicia Dixon

Andrew Kaneb***

Claire Schmeller***

VIOLIN 3

Perla Díaz*

Sherly Hernandez-Rodas

Sean Park***

Abby Nishiwaki***

VIOLA

Cindy Lorenzana

CELLO

Douglas Nguyen*

Martha Ramirez

Katie Cappola***

Robin Park***

Natalia Arbelaez Solano***

BASS

Chaz Bethel-Brescia***

FLUTE

Yaquelyn Rivera*

Evelyn Marroquin-Medina

Allison Cifuentes

John Inestroza

CLARINET

Gisela Bramonte*

Julio Deleon

Yanely Sajche

Neerav Kumar***

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Made up of young musicians from Trenton, the Trenton Youth Orchestra works with Princeton University students every Saturday in ensemble rehearsals, chamber music, and private lessons.

About the Neighborhood Music Project



INSPIRED by conductor Gustavo Dudamel's residency during Princeton University Concerts' 125th anniversary season, the Neighborhood Music Project aims to reinforce Maestro Dudamel's commitment to music as a force for uniting communities, empowering young people, and promoting positive social change.



A collaboration between Princeton University Concerts and Trenton Arts at Princeton, this multifaceted initiative expands access to the arts in the Trenton Public Schools via artist visits, field trips, an annual creative writing/drawing contest, and support for the Trenton Youth Orchestra. Tomorrow, Sheku and Isata will visit Trenton Central High School, where they will perform for and meet with music students.

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About the Program

By Lucy Caplan © 2022 • Program Annotator

Lucy Caplan is a Lecturer on History and Literature at Harvard University. In 2016 she received the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism.

On the manuscript for Beethoven's Sonata Op. 102, No. 1, the composer inscribed the words "free sonata." Meant to indicate that there is something unconventional about the work's structure, the description is abstract enough to prompt further ruminations. Is the term "free sonata" a paradox? What kind of expressive or interpretive freedom is possible within so codified a form as the sonata? Who is to enjoy this freedom: the composer, the performers, or the audience? These questions resonate beyond the context of this particular piece. If freedom in music is most often associated with improvisation and creative performance practices, then what can it look like within the score-based, highly ritualized world of chamber music? How does a musical form with deep ties to traditionalism—and a sometimes obsessive commitment to the canon and the past—make freedom possible? As many classical music institutions seek out new ways to promote inclusivity, diversity, and equity in their work, such questions—seemingly about musical style—take on increased cultural and social significance.

From Beethoven onwards into the twentieth century, the works on this evening's program take up questions of freedom in both its artistic and political manifestations. From music written under unfree conditions to works which offer commentary on war and violence, these pieces urge us to consider how the world within the concert hall is intertwined with the world beyond its doors.

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**Ludwig van Beethoven, Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 4 in C Major,
Op. 102, No. 1 (1815)**

Alongside the "free sonata" designation, Beethoven handwrote the word "teneramente" (tenderly) across the top of the autograph score of his Sonata No. 4. Both attest to Beethoven's commitment to expressive terms, which he

used with increasing frequency later in his career. Composed at what is typically considered the outset of Beethoven's late period, this sonata and its counterpart, (Op. 102, No. 2) are the composer's two final works for piano and a solo instrument. In both works, Beethoven seems to be venturing off a well-trodden path and into wilder terrain. From this new vantage point, he is free to step outside the parameters of sonata form, rearrange the way that cello and piano relate to one another, and play inventively with textural contrasts between the two instruments.

The cello sings alone in the sonata's opening moment, a stepwise melodic descent with an improvisatory feel. The piano softly joins, and the two come together for a contemplative meditation. The remainder of the movement, which swerves into a minor key, is urgent and rhythmic. The similarly Janus-faced second movement begins again with a slow introduction; this time, the pianist seems to be driving the improvisation, and the cello takes on a supporting role, with sustained notes that plumb the depths of the instrument's lowest register. After some whimsical allusions to the sonata's opening moments, the movement proceeds with a joyous *Allegro vivace*. Bursting with spirited conversation between cello and piano, it stops and starts abruptly, creating a sense of fantastic unpredictability.

Dmitri Shostakovich, Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40 (1934)

Public prominence was a double-edged sword for Shostakovich, as it is for many artists working under conditions of unfreedom. In 1934, his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* catapulted him to fame, with sold-out performances across Moscow and Leningrad. But an infamous 1936 review of that same work, titled "Muddle Instead of Music," threatened to derail his career. On the day that the review appeared, Shostakovich was performing his Sonata for Cello and Piano with the work's dedicatee, Viktor Kubatsky, in the northern city of Archangelsk. One can only imagine how earth-shattering it must have been for Shostakovich to learn of this new attitude toward his music and to contemplate the professional and personal danger that could result.

This convergence is especially striking given how relatively straitlaced a work the sonata is. There is little in it that might be deemed "muddle." Rather, the piece hews closely to formal predecessors like Beethoven. The first movement packages angsty emotional heft within a markedly conventional structure: It features a repeated exposition, sharply contrasting first and second themes, and moments of lyrical expressivity. The scherzo flies by, propelled by percussive gestures in

the piano; the cello's insistent opening rhythms give way to spectacular, glossy harmonics in the trio. The largo, although anguished in feel, expresses that emotion by way of a near-Romantic lyricism, and the closing movement is a fast-paced rondo whose structural clarity is rocked by fleeting moments of tonal ambiguity before ending firmly in d minor.

Frank Bridge, Sonata for Cello and Piano, H. 125 (1917)

"I first played the Sonata with a contemporary pianist of his called Ada May Thomas," recalled cellist Antonia Butler, who gave the French premiere of Bridge's Sonata for Cello and Piano in 1928. "She told me that during the First World War, when Bridge was writing the slow movement, he was in utter despair over the futility of war and the state of the world generally and would walk round Kensington in the early hours of the morning unable to get any rest or sleep." While the sonata contains no explicit allusions to war, these recollections help situate the piece within a fraught historical moment.

Bridge composed the work over a period of several years, from 1913 through 1917, and it conveys the tumultuousness of those years in its expansive musical scope. The first movement erupts with a long, lyrical line in the cello; elongated triplets and other cross-rhythms generate a sense of complexity in the interplay between piano and cello. As the cello's singing lines surge forth from the piano's virtuosic, intricate accompaniment, the movement flows from agitation to serenity and back again. The sonata's second movement—which, according to Butler, reflects Bridge's state of mind during the war—has a more fragmented structure. At the outset, a richly chromatic *adagio ma non troppo* lets the piano display what Benjamin Britten once described as Bridge's "impatience with tonality." The pace quickens and the mood darkens in the following scherzo-like section; but soon, shimmering figures in the piano usher in the *adagio's* return. The movement builds inexorably to an emotional peak which reaches into the cello's highest register before the first movement's thematic hallmarks return in an impassioned coda.

Benjamin Britten, Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 65 (1961)

Britten was a student of Frank Bridge, and the two shared antiwar leanings; Britten became well-known for his pacifist views, which he expressed both through his actions (he was granted conscientious objector status during World War II) and through musical works such as the *War Requiem* and the opera *Owen Wingrave*. The Sonata for Cello and Piano, although not an overtly antiwar work, nevertheless

carries extramusical implications. It was composed for the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, whom Britten met in 1960; given the geopolitical moment of the Cold War, such an international collaboration between English and Soviet artists was symbolically weighty. For Britten's part, he expressed guarded optimism in a 1963 interview in *Pravda* (the same publication in which the denunciation of Shostakovich's work had appeared decades prior): "Until my arrival in the U.S.S.R. I was assailed with doubts whether the Soviet audiences would understand and accept our musical art," he reportedly said, yet "The Soviet public proved not only unusually musical—that I knew all along—but showed an enviable breadth of artistic perception."

Structured in five compact movements, the Sonata begins with a "dialogo" which takes the form of a first-halting, then-animated conversation between cello and piano. After a tense beginning, the lyrical second theme sounds almost impossibly whimsical. In the second movement, scherzo-pizzicato, the cellist abandons the bow for the duration. Britten pushes the possibilities of plucked strings to the limit, asking the cellist to strum chords, engage in rapid-fire passagework, and drum out patterns on the instrument's fingerboard. The plaintive elegia is grounded by dirge-like chords in the piano. Over the course of the movement, the cello's melodic line creeps upward in register, as if seeking out new language to express its anguish. The fourth movement, "Marcia," strides forward with ominous verve, its rhythmic intensity reinforced by the eerie sound of *sul ponticello glissandi* and harmonics. The closing *Moto Perpetuo* is kaleidoscopic: quick rhythmic patterns, jazzy harmonies, and snaky melodies swirl together with increasing intensity before the work comes to an abrupt but decisive close.

About the Artists



SHEKU KANNEH-MASON

Sheku Kanneh-Mason became a household name in 2018 after performing at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Windsor Castle, his performance having been greeted with universal excitement after being watched by nearly two billion people globally. Sheku initially garnered renown as the winner of the 2016 BBC Young Musician competition, the first Black musician to take the title. He has released two chart-topping albums on the Decca Classics label, *Inspiration* in 2018 and *Elgar* in 2020. The latter reached No. 8 in the overall UK Official Album Chart, making Sheku the first cellist in history to reach the UK Top 10.

EXTEND THE LISTENING!

We asked the Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason to share a musical playlist with you. Point your smartphone camera to this code to hear it.



Sheku has made debuts with orchestras such as the Seattle Symphony, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, the Atlanta Symphony, Japan Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, and Baltimore Symphony. Forthcoming highlights include performances with the Cleveland

Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Barcelona Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, and London Philharmonic Orchestra, and on tour with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

In recital, Sheku has performed at illustrious venues and festivals around the world, including Wigmore Hall in London, Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Lucerne and Aldeburgh festivals, Festival de Saint-Denis, Verbier Festival, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Teatro della Pergola in Florence, L'Auditori in Barcelona, the Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, and Carnegie Hall. Since his debut in 2017, Sheku has performed every summer at the BBC Proms, including in 2020 when he gave a recital performance with his sister, Isata, to an empty auditorium due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020, Sheku and his six siblings performed in twice-weekly livestreams from their family home in Nottingham to audiences of hundreds of thousands around the globe. He is the winner of Best Classical Artist at the Global Awards in 2020 and 2021 (the latter as part of the Kanneh-Mason family) and received the 2020 Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artists' Award. Sheku continues his studies with Hannah Roberts at the Royal Academy of Music in London as a Bicentenary Fellow. Sheku was appointed a member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 2020.

ISATA KANNEH-MASON

Isata Kanneh-Mason is the recipient of the 2021 Leonard Bernstein Award, a 2020 Opus Klassik award for best young artist, and as a member of the Kanneh-Mason family, the 2021 best classical artist at the Global Awards. Her debut album on Decca Classics, *Romance—the Piano Music of Clara Schumann*, drew popular and critical acclaim, entering the UK classical charts at No. 1 when it was released in July 2019 and leading *Gramophone* magazine to extol the recording as “one of the most charming and engaging debuts” and Classic FM to praise Isata as “a player of considerable talent.” This was followed in July 2021 by *Summertime*, featuring Barber's piano sonata and a world premiere recording of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Impromptu in B Minor. Her most recent release, *Muse*, with her brother, Sheku, features the Rachmaninoff and Barber sonatas for cello and piano. Since graduation from London's Royal Academy of Music,

Isata has embarked on a successful and increasingly busy concert career as a solo artist with concerto appearances, solo recitals, and chamber concerts throughout the UK and abroad. During the UK's Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020, Isata and her siblings performed livestreamed events from their family home in Nottingham, which garnered over one million views. She recently made her Wigmore Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall (London) solo piano debuts. In the 21/22 season, Isata continues as Young Artist-in-Residence with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Highlights of this and last season include the Royal Philharmonic at the Edinburgh Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Dallas Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and recital tours of North America, both on her own and with Sheku.

Isata is currently one of the European Concert Hall Organisation's Rising Stars, performing recitals at many of the continent's most illustrious concert venues throughout the 21/22 season. She completed her undergraduate degree at the Academy as an Elton John Scholar and performed with Sir Elton in 2013 in Los Angeles. Isata is grateful for support from the Nottingham Soroptimist Trust, Mr. and Mrs. John Bryden, Frank White, and Awards for Young Musicians. She is currently continuing her studies at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin with Kirill Gerstein.

Together Sheku and Isata made their Princeton University Concerts "virtual" debut last season, appearing in recital from their home in Nottingham, England, and then as part of a live post-concert Q&A. They also visited virtually with Trenton public school music students, many of whom are excited to play for them in this evening's pre-concert event, and to finally meet them in person. This concert marks Sheku and Isata's Princeton University Concerts in-person debut.

SUPPORT US

Supporting Princeton University Concerts is critical to our future. Ticket sales cover less than half of the cost of presenting the very best in world-class music. Remaining funds come, in part, from our generous endowment, left to PUC by the Ladies' Musical Committee in 1929. We remain eternally grateful for the support of the Philena Fobes Fine Memorial Fund and the Jesse Peabody Frothingham Fund.

Other support comes from donors like you. We are grateful to the individuals whose support at all levels ensures that musical performance remains a vital part of Princeton, the community, and the region.

If you wish to make a donation to Princeton University Concerts, please call us at 609-258-2800, visit puc.princeton.edu, or send a check payable to Princeton University Concerts to: Princeton University Concerts, Woolworth Center, Princeton, NJ 08544.

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We are deeply grateful for all of the support we have received and thank all of our donors and volunteers. The list below acknowledges gifts of \$100 or more, received between September 1, 2021 and April 1, 2022. If you see an error or would like to make a change in your listing, please contact the Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

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